

# 2004 AGRICULTURAL SUMMARY

**January** began with very cold temperature across the state, especially the Plains and North Texas where temperatures plummeted to below zero in a few locations. Below average temperatures were also felt across the remainder of the state and even as far down as the Rio Grande Valley where thermometer readings approached freezing. During mid month, another front brought rain and snow to portions of the Panhandle and the South Plains. Further south, the snow turned to rain across Central Texas and portions of the Edwards Plateau. The Upper Coast and southern counties in East Texas received steady rain all month. Scattered showers also occurred in the Trans Pecos and the Coastal Bend regions. Small grains were suffering from moisture stress in many areas during early month, however some relief was noted in areas where rains fell. For many producers who were grazing their fields, the rains came too late to allow further grazing. Land preparation was active, especially in southern areas as spring planting was just around the corner. Supplemental feeding was heavy across the state as many small grain fields were grazed out. Sickness in livestock was prevalent due to the wide swing in temperatures. Range and pastures saw some relief in areas where rains fell, however many areas remained dry and pasture condition, continued to decline.

**February** began with heavy snow across the South Plains and North Central Texas, with as much as a foot accumulating over many locations. Further south, the snow turned to freezing rain and sleet resulting in hazardous conditions. The added moisture was welcomed by many small grain producers, however many other areas remained dry and small grains continued to suffer. By mid month, heavy rainfall was again reported in areas across East Texas, the Upper Coast, and portions of Central and South Texas. Small grain conditions improved in some areas as the result of the added moisture, however it was too late for some areas, and crop abandonment was common. Planting began in the Rio Grande Valley in mid to late month, however many areas of Central Texas remained too wet and planting was on hold. Range and pasture condition varied from too dry to too wet during late month. Many livestock herds were bogging in the mud and supplemental feeding was necessary in these areas as well as in extremely dry locations. while others were extremely dry.

**March** began with unusually wet conditions across the Panhandle and South Plains. High winds and hail crossed North Central Texas and the Edwards Plateau causing some tree and structural damage. East Texas, parts of South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley also received significant moisture early in the month. Small grain conditions improved dramatically nearly statewide. Some producers were able to return to grazing their fields. After weeks of wet fields, corn planting finally started on the Upper Coast and Central Texas. By month's end, nearly all seed corn was in the

ground in those regions. Planting was also completed in the Rio Grande Valley by mid month. Cotton planting in southern regions was delayed in the first half of the month, but moved along at a quick pace by month's end. Early planted cotton fields were emerging in portions of the Rio Grande Valley by month's end. Sorghum, rice and soybean planting had begun on the Upper Coast. Pastures in East Texas were slowly drying out. Supplemental feeding remained necessary as pasture green-up slowly moved northward. Many areas remained dry at the end of the month and forecast were not promising.

**April** began with above average rainfall across the majority of state. Rains with 1 to 3 inch accumulations were common, and 10 inch accumulations were reported in some central locations. Six inch accumulations were common in portions of the Plains and Coastal Bend during the month. High winds, hail, localized flooding and some tornadoes caused damage in portions of Central Texas and the Coastal Bend. The Panhandle experienced a hard freeze during mid month as temperature dipped down into the 20's. Some freeze damage was reported on small grains, however major damage was avoided. In other areas, small grains benefitted greatly from the increased moisture and what once was a sub par crop began to improve. Corn planting was completed in central areas and had started on the Panhandle as conditions allowed. Producers in Central Texas and the Upper Coast were planting cotton as soon as fields were dry enough. Replanting was necessary on some acres due to heavy rainfall after planting. Rio Grande Valley cotton was emerging and in good shape. Planting of other crops was ongoing from Central Texas southward. Hay cutting moved ahead in southern locations and supplemental feeding lessened in most areas. A few areas remained dry, and in these locations, pasture decline was ongoing and supplemental feeding remained necessary.

Heavy rains continued to fall over several regions in the month of **May**. Most locations in the Coastal Bend, Upper Coast, and East Texas received more than 6 inches of rain for the month. Isolated locations reported up to a 12 inches of precipitation. Most other regions experienced scattered showers and an occasional heavy downpour. Small grains progressed well across the majority of the state and harvest started in southern locations as fields dried. Powdery mildew and rust became a nuisance, especially in the central locations. Corn planting was completed on the Panhandle, and many fields had emerged with excellent stands. Fields in the Rio Grande Valley and Coastal Bend began to develop ears. Cotton in southern areas was developing behind schedule due to the lack of heat units associated with the long string of cloudy days. Most cotton on the South Plains was planted with good soil moisture reported. Some producers in drier locations were waiting for a rain to seed their crop. Sorghum was being planted on the South Plains at a fast pace. Some fields in the Coastal Bend and Upper Coast were disastered due to flooding. Pecan growers

were spraying for casebearers and anticipating a heavy nut set. Pastures and rangeland were in generally good shape, although a few drier locations in western regions and the Rio Grande Valley were in considerably poor shape. Supplemental feeding was very light in a majority of locations, however continued to be heavy in the few extremely dry locations.

It was the third wettest **June** on record in the state of Texas. The rains were unrelenting in nearly every corner of the state. Widespread areas of the Upper Coast, East Texas, Central and North Central Texas were deluged by 12 to 15 inches of rain. Most other regions received downpours of 6 to 8 inches of precipitation. Much of the rain was caused by a tropical disturbance off the southwest coast of Louisiana. While this disturbance directly affected eastern regions, the increased moisture from the system combined with stalled areas of low pressure to produce massive amounts of torrential rain showers for the entire state. Severe flooding occurred as creeks and rivers overflowed their banks leaving many fields and pastures underwater. Hail and high winds were reported across the Panhandle and North Central Texas. Harvest of small grains was slow with many delays in most areas and varying amounts of damage was reported from the storms. Some fields were completely destroyed by high winds and hail. There were also reports of head sprouting in the wettest locations. By month's end, corn harvest was ongoing in southern locations and replanting cotton occurred in a few areas of the Plains. Some damage was reported from winds in pecan orchards, but the wet weather was overwhelmingly favorable for the crop. Range and pastures were in generally good condition, however several dry areas remained and conditions by month's end were beginning to become severe. For the most part, good livestock conditions held steady, although some cattle herds were still tromping through the mud in wetter areas.

**July** was unusual to say the least. Instead of being generally hot and dry throughout the month, temperatures reached record lows in a few areas as the result of slow moving cool fronts. Rains fell across most areas especially during the last two weeks. Accumulations varied, but two to eight inch rains were common for many areas. High winds and hail damaged crops in a few locations, and some flooding was reported in other locations. As a result of the rainy period, soil moisture levels increased and crops that had been in danger of failure began to improve and show signs of normal growth and development. Range and pasture improvement was widespread by month's end. Water available for livestock was replenished in many areas.

**August** began with more rain in some areas. Many areas of the Plains experienced light to moderate rainfall, and damaging hail storms. Other areas further south received moderate rainfall, with accumulations up to four inches common. Unusually cool conditions continued throughout the month. Crop development

continued, however the cooler temperatures caused a lack of heat units that many crops needed to develop. Unusually cool conditions continued throughout the month. Harvest moved ahead, however was stalled at times due to frequent rains. Hay production increased across most areas and many producers were harvesting their third cutting by month's end. Range and pastures were rated as mostly adequate to very good across the majority of the state during the month. Livestock herds were in good shape and very little supplemental feeding was necessary. By late month, conditions became warmer and more average in many areas. Land preparation moved ahead on the Plains and planting of small grains was underway in many areas of Central and South Texas.

**September** began with mild and wet conditions across most areas of the state. Daytime high temperatures were lower than average, and some crops remained in need of adequate heat units. Hail storms damaged a few crops on the Plains, but no widespread damage was reported. Planting of small grains moved ahead as drying out occurred. Cotton harvest was active, however many delays occurred as drying out between rains was slow. By mid month, drier conditions returned, but temperatures remained cooler than normal. Coastal locations experienced a few strong storms and a few downpours delivered accumulations of up to five inches. Hurricane Ivan brought more rainfall late in the month to portions of East Texas and the Coastal bend. Planting of small grains moved ahead, but was slow as conditions across the state were generally wet. Pastures were in good condition in most areas as a result of the rainfall and cooler temperatures. Haying operations continued, but were much slower around the end of the month as fields were wet and drying out was slow. Livestock herds were in good condition and grazing was adequate across most areas.

**October** began with heavy rains across portions of the Plains, Trans Pecos, Edwards Plateau and Central Texas. The Southern Panhandle and South Plains areas received the brunt of storms and some locations received up to ten inches of rain. Planting and harvesting activity in these areas was generally on hold. By mid month, rains continued over the state and some flooding was reported in areas of the Edwards Plateau. In the few locations that remained dry, row crop harvest moved ahead slowly. Heat units continued to be needed across the Plains, especially for cotton development. Wet conditions were common during the later days of the month. Most days in mid month were cloudy to partly cloudy with intermittent to heavy rainfall across many areas of the state. Flooding and minor property damage was reported in some locations. A few areas became dry enough in late month to allow harvest to pick up, but widespread drying was needed. Range and pastures were in good shape for the winter months. Some supplemental feeding was necessary, but mostly due to excessively wet pastures. Pastures in some northern locations were showing signs of dormancy resulting from cool temperatures.

Wet conditions early in **November** continued to be undesirable for planting and harvesting. Heavy snowfall and near blizzard conditions crossed the Plains during the first week of the month. High winds caused varying degrees of damage to crops in the path of the snow storms. Further south, cold rains caused muddy conditions, and the first frost of the season occurred in many central locations. Conditions moderated somewhat by mid month, but harvest remained mostly on hold and dormancy in range and pastures continued to move southward. Some harvest occurred in the drier locations, but by late month conditions turned downward again with widespread rains, sleet and snow fell across the Plains. Heavy flooding was reported in a few areas with most damage occurring to roadways and fences. Harvest remained on hold in several areas of the state, and even with brief periods of sunshine, drying out was still needed. Range and pastures received the most benefit from the wet conditions, however some pasture damage occurred due to trampling of wet pastures.

In early **December**, sunshine returned and allowed harvest to resume, but many areas remained too wet and drying was still needed. Planting of small grains resumed in many areas, but the first hard freeze came to central locations and emergence was hampered by low temperatures. By mid month, conditions were again deteriorating as temperatures plummeted and record lows were reported in many locations. Remaining harvest was again stalled across the Plains and as a result, many producers would not complete harvest until well into the next year. Some areas across the northern part of the state received heavy snowfall and a few locations received snow for the first time in eighty plus years. Supplemental feeding increased with the extremes in conditions and some death loss in livestock herds was reported. The window for planting small grains ended, and several producers opted not to plant winter grains due the wet fall conditions.